

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-03 NSC-05 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 SCCT-01 SY-05 USSS-00 IO-10 AF-06

PRS-01 USIA-06 ACDA-05 OMB-01 /087 W

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P R 261155Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4082

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 5387

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE, PLO

SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN LEBANON FOLLOWING RECENT  
PHALANGIST-FEDAYEEN CLASHES

REFS: (A) BEIRUT 5000; (B) USDAO BEIRUT 0236 APR 75

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH APRIL 16 CEASEFIRE BETWEEN LOCAL PHALANGIST  
FORCES AND FEDAYEEN IS HOLDING SO FAR, NO SOLUTION COMPATIBLE  
WITH CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND AIMS OF PARTIES HAS BEEN FOUND.

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BASIC ISSUE IS PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE RELATIONS, AND MOST ONE

CAN THUS EXPECT IS MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. CONSEQUENTLY, ALL ELEMENTS FOR CONTINUED TENSION, INSTABILITY AND FURTHER STRIFE REMAIN. CONTINUED CALM DEPENDS ON ABILITY BOTH LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP TO CONTROL EXTREMIST ELEMENTS WITHIN THEIR RANKS, AND EFFORTS ARE CURRENTLY BEING MADE TO THAT END. APPOINTMENT OF A STRONG PRIME MINISTER (WHICH IS PROBABLY A VAIN HOPE) WOULD ALSO AID IMMEASURABLY IN CALMING SITUATION BY RESTORING SOME DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE AMONG ALL ELEMENTS IN GOL'S ABILITY AND DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN CIVIL ORDER.

END SUMMARY.

1. IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF LAST WEEK'S PHALANGIST-FEDAYEEN CLASHES IN LEBANON WAS IN MOST ESSENTIAL RESPECTS ACCIDENTAL, ALTHOUGH PROVOCATIVE BEHAVIOR ON BOTH SIDES CONTRIBUTED. FIERCE EMOTIONS AND VIOLENT REPERCUSSIONS WHICH IT UNLEASHED, HOWEVER, WERE BY NO MEANS UNFORESEEABLE. PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAD WITNESSED GRADUAL RISE IN TENSIONS HERE, MARKED BY (A) UPSURGE IN CONFESSIONAL AND ANTI-PALESTINIAN FEELING GROWING OUT OF MARCH DISTURBANCES AND FEDAYEEN ENCROACHMENTS IN SIDON, (B) VISIBLE DIMINUTION IN GOL'S ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO RESIST SUCH ENCROACHMENTS, (C) HEIGHTENED FEAR OF IMPENDING ISRAELI REPRISALS FOLLOWING MARCH 5 FATAH TERRORIST RAID ON TEL AVIV, (D) WAXING WAR OF WORDS BETWEEN PHALANGIST LEADERS AND SUNNI MOSLEM, LEFTIST, PALESTINIAN AND "OPPOSITION" SPOKESMEN RE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF FEDAYEEN PRESENCE IN LEBANON, AND (E) GENERAL UNCERTAINTY RE COURSE OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS CONNECTED WITH ME SETTLEMENT EFFORT. AS RESULT, SIGNIFICANT SEGMENT OF LEBANESE CHRISTIAN POPULATION HAD BECOME MORE NERVOUS AND INCLINED TO TAKE MATTERS FORCIBLY INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. AT SAME TIME, FEDAYEEN AND THEIR LEBANESE SYMPATHIZERS HAD BECOME MORE DISPOSED TO REACT VIOLENTLY AGAINST ANY MOVE (REAL OR IMAGINED) THAT MIGHT LEAD TO PLACING GREATER CONSTRAINTS ON FEDAYEEN PRESENCE IN LEBANON.

2. APRIL 16 CEASEFIRE FORESTALLED CONTENDING PARTIES FROM PUSHING MATTERS TO POINT OF ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION. IN CONTRAST TO PAST LEBANESE-FEDAYEEN DISTURBANCES, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN NO RPT NO PRETENSE THAT ANY REAL OR MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS (A LA 1969 CAIRO AGREEMENT OR STILLBORN 1973

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MELKART ARRANGEMENTS) LEADING TO A "LASTING" SOLUTION OF EXISTING TENSIONS HAS BEEN FOUND. FACTORS OF INSTABILITY MENTIONED ABOVE CONTINUE AT WORK DESPITE APPARENT RETURN TO "NORMALITY" REPEATEDLY PROCLAIMED BY PRIMIN SOLH. FEDAYEEN REMAIN ACUTELY SUSPICIOUS OF ALL "PLOTS" TO "LIGUIDATE" THEIR LAST BASTION HERE, WHILE PHALANGISTS AND OTHER LEBANESE CHRISTIAN GROUPS APPEAR MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO SET LIMITS ON WHAT THEY REGARD AS INCREASING PALESTINIAN INTERFERENCE WITH AND ENCROACHMENTS ON

LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY.

3. GOL POSITION: DESPITE APPEARANCE OF INTENSE GOL ACTIVITY IN TRYING TO RESTORE ORDER DURING LAST WEEK'S CLASHES THROUGH SERIES OF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AND FRENETIC "CONSULTATIONS" WITH TOP-LEVEL LEADERS OF CONTENDING FACTIONS, IT WAS PAINFULLY CLEAR THAT GOL LEADERSHIP FOUND ITSELF INCAPABLE OF EXERTING EFFECTIVE CONTROL. (CABINET MEETINGS TENDED TO DENGNERATE INTO SHOUTING-MATCHES BETWEEN PHALANGIST AND "PROGRESSIVE" MINISTERS.) HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR TIMELY EFFORTS EXERTED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL LEBANESE PERSONALITIES -- PARTICULARLY HENRI PHARAON, SHIITE IMAM MUSA SADR AND CERTAIN OTHER MODERATE MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS-- ASSISTED BY ARAB LEAGUE SYG MAHMOUD RIAD AND VARIOUS ARAB PRESSURES (ESPECIALLY SYRIAN), COPE AND INTENSITY OF FIGHTING MIGHT EASILY HAVE WIDENED.

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P R 261155Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4083

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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4. GOL LEADERSHIP NATURALLY WAS (AND STILL IS) ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF ITS MILITARY AND POLITICAL WEAKNESS VIS-A-VIS FEDAYEEN AND THEIR LOCAL LEFTIST AND MOSLEM SUPPORTERS. LONGSTANDING FEAR OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN ANOTHER NIGHTMARE CONFRONTATION WITH THESE COMBINED FORCES COMPELLED GOL'S TOP CIVILIAN LEADERS TO HOLD LEBANESE ARMY AND SECURITY FORCES ALOOF FROM LAST WEEK'S CLASHES. (GIVEN SWIFT AND ALARMING UPSURGE IN INTERNAL POLITICAL AND CONFESSIONAL UNREST WHICH RESULTED  
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FROM ARMY'S INTERVENTION IN LAST MONTH'S TROUBLES IN SIDON, WE BELIEVE THIS DECISION WAS WISE.) GOL'S UNWILLINGNESS TO PLAY STRONGER ROLE IN IMPOSING ORDER ON CONTENDING FACTIONS IN LATEST INSTANCE, HOWEVER, HAS MADE ITS WEAKNESS IN MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER MORE PATENT THAN EVER--FACTOR WHICH IN FUTURE (IF STRONGER GOVT. IS NOT ESTABLISHED) IS LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE GREATER PALESTINIAN INTRANSIGENCE AND ALSO TO PROMPT RIGHT-WING CHRISTIAN GROUPS TO ACT MORE OPENLY IN DEFENSE OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS. GOL'S DEMONSTRATED WEAKNESS HAS PROBABLY ALSO DISCREDITED REPUTATION OF SOLH CABINET BEYOND REPAIR AND ALMOST CERTAINLY ROBBED IT OF ANY PROSPECT OF GOVERNING EFFECTIVELY IN FUTURE. ONLY FACTOR PERMITTING ITS CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE FOR TIME BEING IS DIFFICULTY PRES FRANGIE IS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE IN FINDING--IN CURRENT CLIMATE OF AROUSED CONFESSIONAL AND POLITICAL FEELINGS--ANOTHER "OBEDIENT" SUNNI MOSLEM LEADER WILLING TO REPLACE SOLH AS PRIME MINISTER.

5. POSITION OF LEBANESE ARMY: ARMY HIGH COMMAND CONTINUES TO CHAFE UNDER WHAT IT REGARDS AS LEADERSHIP VACUUM IN GOL CIVILIAN ESTABLISHMENT, AND ARMY MORALE IS REPORTED AT LOW EBB. AT SAME TIME, ARMY LEADERSHIP IS ALSO EXTREMELY CONSCIOUS OF ITS RELATIVE WEAKNESS VIS-A-VIS FEDAYEEN (WHOSE 10,000 "REGULARS" PLUS "MILITIA" FORCES HERE ARE STRONGER NOW THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE MAY 1973), AS WELL AS OF DANGEROUSLY POLARIZING IMPACT WHICH ARMY INTERVENTION COULD HAVE HAD ON LOCAL CONFESSIONAL AND POLITICAL ATTITUDES. ALTHOUGH ARMY WAS PREPARED INTERVENE IF

SO ORDERED (UNDER CONDITIONS REPORTED OUR 4916),  
SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS GENERALLY SAW WISDOM IN  
GOL'S RELUCTANCE TO INVOLVE ARMY. THERE IS  
EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT ARMY PERSONNEL SYMPATHETIC  
TO PHALANGE FURNISHED IT SOME HEAVY WEAPONS ITEMS  
AND "TECHNICAL" ASSISTANCE" DURING LAST WEEK'S  
FIGHTING, NOT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF PAST REPORTS  
THAT ARMY ON OCCASION (E.G., POST-MAY 1973)

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COVERTLY SUPPLIED SMALL ARMS AND COMMUNICATIONS  
EQUIPMENT TO PHALANGE AND OTHER CHRISTIAN "MILITIA"  
GROUPS.

6. FEDAYEEN POSITION: WE BELIEVE PLO LEADERSHIP  
HAS NOT BEEN ALTOGETHER PLEASED BY LAST  
WEEK'S OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES. (WE HAVE CON-  
SISTENTLY MAINTAINED THAT 'ARAFAT AND CO., ARE NO  
MORE EAGER THAN LEBANESE AUTHORITIES TO RISK  
TOUCHING OFF ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION WHICH WOULD  
TARNISH PLO'S SO-CALLED "MODERATE" IMAGE IN MANY  
ARAB AND FOREIGN EYES, INVOLVE HEAVY PALESTINIAN  
CASUALTIES, AND DEFLATE PLO PRETENSIONS TO WAGE "ARMED  
STRUGGLE" AGAINST ISRAEL.) ONCE FIGHTING STARTED,  
HOWEVER, FEDAYEEN LEADERS OF ALL STRIPES FELT  
COMPELLED TO DISPLAY FIRMLY UNITED FRONT AGAINST  
WHAT PLO PROPAGANDA APPARATUS HAS BEEN DESCRIBING  
AS ANOTHER "IMPERIALIST-ZIONIST LIQUIDATION PLOT."

7. MOREOVER, IN KEEPING WITH 'ARAFAT'S USUAL RE-  
LIANCE ON SEAT-OF-PANTS OPPORTUNISM IN PLAYING IN-  
TERNAL LEBANESE DIFFICULTIES TO PALESTINIAN AD-  
VANTAGE, PLO LEADERSHIP--ONCE FIGHTING STARTED--  
SEEMS TO HAVE VIEWED LATEST CRISIS AS ANOTHER  
OPPORTUNITY TO ENTRENCH AND FURTHER EXTEND FEDAYEEN  
PRESENCE AND FREEDOM OF ACTION IN LEBANON (JUST  
AS THEY DID PREVIOUSLY IN SIDON AND ELSEWHERE IN  
SOUTH LEBANON). IN THIS THEY APPEAR TO HAVE HAD  
SOME SUCCESS IN AREAS IMMEDIATELY EAST AND NORTH  
OF BEIRUT'S BURJ AL BARAJNEH REFUGEE CAMP NEAR  
MAIN AIRPORT ROAD. IN ADDITION, FEDAYEEN  
ALLIANCE WITH LOCAL "PROGRESSIVE," LEFTIST  
AND PAN-ARAB NATIONALIST GROUPS EMERGED FROM  
LAST WEEK'S CRISIS MORE FIRMLY CEMENTED THAN EVER.  
THIS DEVELOPMENT CAN ONLY HEIGHTEN CHRISTIAN  
AND LEBANESE NATIONALIST APPREHENSIONS OVER FUTURE  
POSSIBILITY OF SOME RADICAL CHANGE THIS  
COUNTRY'S POLITICAL STRUCTURE.

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P R 261155Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4084

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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8. AT VERY LEAST, FEDAYEEN AND THEIR LOCAL SUP-  
PORTERS (PRIMARILY LEFTIST)--BY INDULGING IN WELL-PLANNED AND  
SELECTIVE BOMBINGS, ROCKETINGS AND HIT-AND-RUN FORAYS  
IN VIRTUALLY ALL PARTS OF BEIRUT DURING LAST WEEK'S  
FIGHTING--SEEMED TO BE WARNING BOTH GOL AND  
LEBANESE PUBLIC ALIKE THAT THEY POSSESS CAPACITY  
FOR UNLEASHING COMPREHENSIVE URBAN TERRORISM  
CAMPAIGN WHICH WOULD MAKE ANY ALL-OUT CONFRONTA-  
TION WITH THEM DISASTROUS FOR LEBANON. THESE  
TACTICS WERE ACCOMPANIED THROUGHOUT LAST WEEK'S

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FIGHTING BY POINTED STATEMENTS FROM PLO SPOKESMEN TO EFFECT THAT FEDAYEEN 'RESTRAINT' WAS WEARING THIN AND THAT THEIR ADVERSARIES COULD BE MADE TO SUFFER GRIEVOUSLY IF HOSTILITIES WERE TO CONTINUE OR EXPAND. ALL THIS PLUS EMERGENCE HEIGHTENED LEFTIST TERRORISM AND POLITICAL ACTION HAS LED TO GREATER UNEASE AND FOREBODING AMONG LOCAL POPULATION THAN WAS CASE AFTER PREVIOUS LEBANESE-FEDAYEEN CEASEFIRES, AND IT HAS LEFT FEDAYEEN MORE SOLIDLY ENTRENCHED BOTH MILITARILY AND AS MAJOR POLITICAL FORCE IN LEBANON.

9. PHALANGIST POSITION: DESPITE PUBLIC APPREHENSION NOTED ABOVE, PHALANGE PERFORMANCE IN RECENT CLASHES, AS NOTED REFTEL B, HAS BOOSTED ITS MORALE AND ADDED TO ITS POPULARITY AMONG MANY LEBANESE (95% CHRISTIANS, BUT ALSO SOME MEMBERS OF OTHER CONFESSIONAL GROUPS) WHO REMAIN UNHAPPY OVER STRONG POSITION ENJOYED BY FEDAYEEN IN THIS COUNTRY. HAVING DEMONSTRATED ITS READINESS TO CHALLENGE FEDAYEEN PRESENCE AND BUOYED BY ITS SUCCESS IN "HOLDING ITS OWN" IN LAST WEEK'S FIGHTING, PHALANGE CAN PROBABLY BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE DISPLAYING TOUGH ATTITUDE TOWARD PALESTINIANS AND THEIR LOCAL ALLIES IN WEEKS AHEAD--BEHAVIOR WHICH MIGHT GRADUALLY ASSUME NEW PROVOCATIVE OVERTONES AND RESULT IN FURTHER INCIDENTS LIABLE TO CAUSE BREAKDOWN OF CURRENT CEASEFIRE. IF THAT HAPPENS, PHALANGIST LEADERSHIP ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD NOT EXPECT TO CONFRONT FEDAYEEN ALONGE, BUT WOULD SEEK--AS MANY OF ITS CADRES DID IN LAST WEEK'S FIGHTING--TO CREATE CHAOTIC SITUATION IN WHICH LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO INTERVENE.

10. "HIDDEN HANDS": PRIMIN SOLH HAS REPEATEDLY CHARGED THAT ELEMENTS IN PAY OF ISRAEL AND OTHER UNSPECIFIED FOREIGN MASTERS HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN TRYING--THROUGH RANDOM TERRORIST OPERATIONS--TO WIDEN SCOPE OF LAST WEEK'S CLASHES AND INCREASE LOCAL TENSIONS SINCE APR 16 CEASE FIRE. APPEARS TO US THAT BOTH LIBYAN AND IRAQI AGENTS WERE INDEED  
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INVOLVED IN FOMENTING ADDITIONAL TROUBLE HERE LAST WEEK--E.G., WE HAVE RELIABLE REPORT OF CONSIDERABLE CONTACTS HAVING BEEN CARRIED ON WITH LEADERS

OF CERTAIN RADICAL LEFTIST LEBANESE FACTIONS BY LIBYAN EMBASSY, WHOSE PAYROLL FOR FUNDING DISSIDENT LOCAL ELEMENTS IS ESTIMATED BY ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE INFORMANT AT APPROXIMATELY DOLS 6 MILLION PER MONTH. WE ALSO HAVE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT MEMBERS OF SYRIAN POPULAR PARTY (PPS), LONG-TIME BITTER ADVERSARY OF PHALANGE AND HIGH ON GOL'S LIST OF POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS HERE, WERE NOT ONLY INVOLVED IN LATEST FIGHTING BUT ALSO HAVE ENDEAVORED TO KEEP POT BOILING BETWEEN PHALANGE AND FEDAYEEN.

11. FUTURE PROSPECTS: CEASEFIRE HAS SO FAR HELD REASONABLY WELL, ALTHOUGH TENSION AND UNEASE AMONG POPULATION IS STILL STRONG. IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS TO RESTRAIN EXTREMIST ELEMENTS WITHIN RANKS OF BOTH SIDES, AND EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO THAT END. GENERAL PUBLIC ALARM AROUSED BY RESULTS OF LAST WEEK'S CLASHES MAY HAVE SOME RESTRAINING, IF NOT CHASTENING, EFFECT ON ALL CONCERNED WHICH MAY AID PROCESS OF MAINTAINING CURRENT CALM. APPOINTMENT OF A STRONG PRIME MINISTER WOULD HELP IMMEASURABLY IN RESTORING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN GOL'S ABILITY AND DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN ORDER, AND THIS WOULD BE OF IMMENSE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE IN THE PEACE-KEEPING PROCESS. UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE OF PRES. FRANGIE'S MAKE-UP AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF DIVISIONS AMONG LEBANESE LEADERS AS RESULT OF RECENT CLASHES, THIS PROBABLY WILL NOT REPEAT NOT HAPPEN. IN ANY EVENT, MUST BE EMPHASIZED THAT LATEST PHALANGE-PALESTINIAN CLASHES ARE BUT A MANIFESTATION OF THE MORE BASIC PROBLEM--I.E., RELATIONS BETWEEN LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS IN CONTEXT OF STRONG FEDAYEEN PRESENCE HERE. CONSEQUENTLY, ALL THE ELEMENTS FOR CONTINUED TENSION, INSTABILITY AND FURTHER STRIFE REMAIN. IT NOT REPEAT NOT LIKELY THAT THIS MORE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM CAN BE  
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SOLVED OR EVEN ALLEVIATED EXCEPT IN CONTEXT OF AN OVERALL ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE SETTLEMENT, A POINT WHICH IS BEING AMPLY DEMONSTRATED BY OUR MANY CONTACTS THROUGHOUT LEBANON WHO ARE BEGGING USG TO HASTEN THE PEACEMAKING PROCESS.  
GODLEY

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## Message Attributes

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